Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Marge Ragona
Pastor

January 19, 1995

Rev. Jay Neely, District Coordinator
Gulf-Lower Atlantic District
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan
Community Churches
1379 Tullie Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Jay:

As you know, Covenant had the privilege of appointing Greg Bullard of the Huntsville MCC as student clergy on August 28, 1994. We appointed him as student clergy at Covenant because at that time Huntsville did not have a pastor, and I knew Greg from his New Testament class and felt I could work with him. He will need a letter from you and the District Committee for his licensing packet, I believe, and I knew I had not formally conveyed this information to the District.

Additionally, since I have been pastor, in July of 1994, I appointed Andy Mullins of our church as Student Clergy. Andy was a Baptist Minister of Youth, has his undergraduate degree from a Christian college and part of a seminary degree. I am enclosing his resume, as well as Greg's.

I have appointed Cliff Tinney as a deacon, also in July. Cliff used to be a Pentecostal preacher, does not have the educational qualifications to transfer credentials, and has been making us a wonderful deacon. He has a marvelous testimony of the change in his life since coming to Covenant.

I will be appointing, on March 5th, Eddie Merrell and Mark Brown as deacons. Eddie was a member of Covenant in the past and served as pastor of the Birmingham Community Church, a breakaway church from Covenant. Since returning to us, he has been an exemplary member and has taken on a great deal of leadership during his training year for the diaconate. He is now the chair of children's ministries at Covenant. He is a fine young man and one of our youngest people in leadership at Covenant. Mark Brown is a drug abuse counselor at Bradford Parkside Hospital and is at Montevallo in the Bachelor of Social Work program. He is a quiet, reserved man, with a depth of spirituality that amazes all of us. He is <u>our</u> "preachin' deacon."

I am enclosing resumes on all these deacons and deacons in training. Our diaconal training program runs twice a month for a year and is in pretty fair depth as far as the coverage of

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the deacon's work goes. We cover personal qualifications; biblical basis for the diaconate; the work of the deacon with those in need and the friendless; worship, communion and preaching; death and dying; peer listening in the areas of homosexuality, homosexuality and the Bible, crisis intervention, and relationship problems. Additionally, we do some work around HIV and prevention, Christian ethics, and Christian education, including faith development and the deacon as "soul friend" or spiritual advisor. It's a pretty fair program, and some of our church have taken it for their own spiritual development, as well as looking to the future diaconate. Dennis Luft is in this year's program and may be able to explain more about what we do.

We have three women (one in the group at Tuscaloosa) and three men in this year's group. Not all of them, of course, will become deacons. We are looking to the day when we have a deacon for every ten members to help with spiritual oversight and friendship. We will now have six deacons, four men and two women, which is one deacon for about every 20 members. We took in three members Sunday, bringing us to 111.

We elected a new Board of Directors Sunday. Allan Francis remains on the Board as Treasurer, Dennis Luft is Clerk, Mark Moore (our newsletter art director and co-editor) is Vice-Moderator. Mark is a young African-American and represents the younger members of the church. He recently graduated from Montevallo and brought a bright young group into the church with him. Dr. Carol Cowley, a physician and the spouse of Susan Walker, our Music Director, was also elected to the Board, as was William Berry, an accountant. It should be an excellent Board. It gives us a nicely balanced Board of mature and young people, men and women, and a racial balance we have not had previously.

I hope the District Committee will see fit to approve of our church's choices in leadership. Kay Hendrix, Shirley Cooper and Cal McCloskey remain with us as deacons, and John Hankins is our other Student Clergy, now completing his work and applying for licensing. John is the pastoral leader at the Tuscaloosa Parish Extension. John, to the best of my knowledge, was appointed by Cliff Morrison in 1993. He has been at Covenant all the time I have been here, and effectively functioned as Associate Pastor while I was functioning as (Interim?) Pastor during Cliff's final illness. Currently, Covenant is training one deacon for John. This should bnng us up to date on who is doing what at Covenant.

I have enclosed our Goals package for 1995-96, our income and expense sheet for 1994, and our budget for 1995. We do expect to apply for Charter this year, and will be working toward that this summer.

My love to you and George, and my best to the District Committee.

In Christ's love,

Rev. Marge Ragona
Pastor

Killoran (cont.)

just stay in our huddles passing signals like crazy and feeling good about what's goin' on. The questions I would put to you come straight out of the Talmud; "If not you, who?" "If not now, when?"

When I lived in Oregon I was asked one time to perform a ceremony of union at the headwaters of the Metolius River. We got to the lodge where everybody was gathering, and it was pouring down rain. It just didn't seem possible to do the wedding outside, but it mattered so much to the couple, that when there was a break in the weather, we decided to go for it. Everybody piled into cars and off we went to the parking lot at the access to the headwaters.

The wedding guests trekked off down the path, and when it seemed that they had time to be in place, the flutist started to play and I led the couple and their attendants down the slope. We came around a curve and there on a stone platform overlooking the prettiest little headwater you ever want to see, the guests were all arranged a group of about 30 people and all of them looking at me weird. I didn't have a clue what was up, so I got the couple in place and we went ahead with the ceremony. Only after it was done did my partner come and tell me what had gone on.

They'd gone down the slope, you see, and come to the little platform only to find it filled with about 6" of rain. My partner, who is a very handy sort of guy, figured out pretty quickly that the drain was blocked with leaves. So he got a bunch of people together to pull those leaves aside, just like you'd do if something caught in the drain in your tub. They swept and they pulled, and nothing happened.

They heard the music start and everybody was wringing their hands and then, just as I came around that curve and into sight - whooosh!, the water swirled down the drain and by the time we arrived , it was as if it had never been.

"Wow," said somebody's grandmother - `That minister is one powerful lady."

Now I'm not a Particularly powerful lady, at least not in the sense that woman had in mind. I just happened to be in the right place to get good press, but what really happened was a bunch of people who thought quickly and were willing to get involved - willing to get their hands dirty, not for their own good but for the good of somebody who didn't even know they were in need.

If not us, who?

If not now, when?

John Kennedy was once asked how he came to be a war hero and he replied that it was purely a matter of accident - he was going along minding his

Respect is a key to relationship (Killoran Cont.)

business, and somebody sank his boat. Somebody's out there - and we know who -somebody's out there firing torpedoes at human decency and cutting holes in life preservers.

Somebody's out there - and we know who -

and if we do not work together, if people of faith stay turned inwards and don't work together, then society may well sink, my friends, and not just you, not just me, but everything we value and a everything a humane world needs is going to go down with the ship.

We need to work together, and that's something we don't always know how to do. Somebody did a big study of couples who had been together 15 years or longer - anybody here in a committed relationship they've been in for 15 years or longer? Somebody did a big study a few years ago - gay couples and straight couples, looking for a common denominator of what worked. Some people said this, some people said that, but THE key ingredient that held those long-term couples together when all around them things were flying apart, the key ingredient was RESPECT.

I tell you this - because respect is also what works if you're going to "come our' yet one more time, "come out" and take your place in the Interfaith community. Respect -- as members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that an Interfaith organization will respect both your theology and the lifestyle commitments that make you unique as a religious

It's a right to have your relationship respected

organization.

As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that your relationships will be honored and your opinions will be heard with respect. As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that discrimination in all its insidious forms will be part of the agenda of any organization that calls itself Interfaith. These things are yours, by right, as part of the Interfaith community.

And the other side of this is that rights bring responsibilities. As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have a responsibility come into the wider religious community with ears that are open and hearts that are respectful of people whose theology and lifestyle and even priorities are different from your own. Yes, I know at least some of you are sick and tired of dealing with straights who just don't get it or just don't care. But we

We need to use our strength (Killoran cont.)

are in this together - and we are not going to win anything if we try to go it alone.

* * * * *

You probably remember the story about the man who was taking a tour of heaven and hell. He got into hell, and there were all these pots full of wonderful food - the smells were enough to make your mouth water, and the look of the food was enough to make an artist cry. All around the table were people with spoons in their hands, but they were thin, emaciated, and their cries of hunger were piteous to the ear, for their arms were too long and try as they might they could not get a bite of food from the pot into their mouth.

The tourist found the scene too painful, so he asked to be shown a scene from heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye, there he was in an identical room - pots full of glorious, fragrant dinner, and a table surrounded with long-armed people holding spoons. What was different in this room was that the people were happy, their cheeks were rosy and they looked well fed. As the tourist stopped and looked, one of the people dipped her spoon into the pot, reached out to the woman on her right, and gently saw that she was fed.

We need to take whatever strength we have and use it! Not just for our own communities, but for the good of all of the creatures of God.

There's a passage in a book by Annie Dillard that I really like, and its with this passage that I want to close, in her book, Holy the Firm, she writes:

Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? There is no one but us. There is no one to send, nor a clean hand, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time, that our innocent fathers are all dead - as if innocence had ever been - and our children busy and troubled and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready having each of us chosen wrongly, made a false start, failed, yielded to impulse and the tangled comfort of pleasures, and grown exhausted . . But there is no one but us. There never has been.

If not you, who?
If not now , when?

Rev. Maureen Killoran

If not now - When?

From Around The District

Good news from Mississippi. **MCC of the Rainbow** is acquiring a building. Carl Matthews-Naylor , Pastor says the building needs work, but the construction is in the able hands of his partner, Larry Naylor. And **MCC of the Gulfcoast** has acquired a building that is now in the process of renovation. Move in dates for both churches will be announced. **MCC Augusta** now has its own building. They meet at 1736 Fenwick St. **New mailing address for MCC New Life:** P.O. Box 221404, Charlotte, NC 28222. Rev. Delores Berry will be at **St. Mary's MCC - Greensboro** Sunday February 25 at 7 PM. On Friday, Marsha Stevens will be in concert at St. Mary's at 7 PM. Ms. Dare Tolar has resigned as Interim Pastoral leader of **Myrtle Beach MCC.** Vice Moderator Bill Oberst will be heading up a worship team. **MCC Nashville** recently hosted Rev's. Reid Christensen, Pastor, First MCC and Rebecca Leckrone of First, following the resignation of Pastor Rev. Buddy Truluck. **MCC Mobile** prepares to celebrate the dedication of its new Government street building the first weekend of March. Mr. Barry Hundley, Board Member from First MCC, has been appointed by the District Committee to the **Board of Ordained Ministry.** He joins Chair, Rev. Christine Oscar, St. Mary's MCC, Alternate Chair, Rev. Wayne Lindsey, St. John's MCC, Ms. Cindy Walker, MCC Montgomery, Rev. Bob Darst, MCC Winston Salem and Rev. Mick Hinson, MCC Greenville on the board. **Christ Covenant MCC** is currently considering the purchase of a new church building. As this newsletter goes to press, they are looking at an existing church building. Mel Bailey, Pastor, **MCC Coastal Georgia - Savannah** reports that the congregation in this eastern Georgia port city is developing new outreach into the community. Mel came to GLAD from Florida where she was a student clergy. And Rev. Bob Galloway has signed on as Interim Pastoral Leader with **MCC of the Tri-Cities.** New interest groups are forming in Alabama and Georgia. Covenant MCC working with folks in **Anniston** and First MCC working with a group in Carrollton.

District Coordinator's Itinerary:

Safe Harbor MCC 2/23-24
MCC Nashville 2/25
Cornerstone MCC 3/3
General Council 3/12-20
MCC Hickory 3/31

The last publication of the District Newsletter was distributed in November. Due to my bout with a cracked rib and pneumonia, the newsletter was not published in December and January. We still need input from the churches. Many of you are very good about keeping us up-to-date, so that we can share it with the other churches. Please keep up the good work.

And , yes, we are working with our new software to publish this newsletter. God bless all. Jay Neely

GLAD TIDINGS

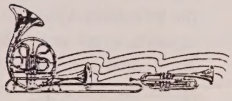
February 16, 1996 Volume 1, Issue 1

TROY PERRY BRINGS HIS DYNAMIC VISION FOR THE DENOMINATION TO GLAD CHURCHES.

GLAD DISTRICT CONFERENCE

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR PLACE
"God's Rainbow Message"

We'll be gathering in Nashville this spring.



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AFFIRM YOUR FAITH

DISTRICT CONFERENCE NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

May 17, 18 & 19 1996

AROUND THE DISTRICT

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MAUREEN KILLORAN AT ASHEVILLE CONFERENCE

Rev. Maureen Killoran, Pastor of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Asheville was a guest speaker at the District Conference in November. Excerpts of her remarks printed here with. Rev. Killoran's permission.

If Not You, Who?
If Not Now, When?

I don't do mornings. I don't do breakfast, even, and yet here I am standing in front of a room full of people only half of whom are even starting to be awake, and I'm supposed to be the SPEAKER, for heaven's sake. I've lived in this town for four years and I didn't know this hotel was even open before noon. But I'm here because some people chose to take a chance that having an acknowledged heterosexual as your speaker might not give your convention a bad name. I'm here, because there are some people in this room whom I am privileged to call good friends, and there are a lot of people here whom I hold in the highest respect, and there are a lot of other people I don't know at all but with whom I know that I am at least walking on the same path. The path I am talking about is the path that is full of people who believe that the Religious Right is wrong, people who would, if they had the courage, put a bumper sticker on their car that says "Another religious person against the Christian Coalition," or the one I've got on the back of my car that says "'Hatred is

Around The District (continued)

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"Not Over The Rainbow But Through It!!"

EXCEL of the Rainbow Zebra will be in Banner Elk, NC from Friday evening April 12 to Sunday afternoon the 14th. Cost is $80 per participant. Some half-cost scholarships are available. Participants are asked to be present for the entire time. Applicants will be notified of acceptance and sent a detailed packet of information. Registration will be limited to 45 persons, based on the first 45 applications received . If you have never been to an Excel weekend or have and know how rewarding it can be get your registration from your local church and mail in by March 15. Mail to EXCEL of the Rainbow Zebra, 989 Drewry St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30306.

.. somebody else's trash (Killoran)

not a family value."

There's a whole lot of people walking along this path, and we've all got our heads down, and we've all got our eyes right on the ground ahead of us. We're all worrying about where our foot is going to go down next, because we've seen people all around us get sucked into quicksand. We've seen people all around us slip on somebody else's trash. We've seen people all around us trip over their feet. We've seen people all around us go down, and by heaven, we're going to go make sure that doesn't happen to us. I'm reminded of the story about the football coach who was aware that the opposition had been scouting his team for the past five games. They knew every signal his players had and every move they were going to make. So he grabbed hold of his guys and he told them to stay back, don't get out there and signal and give the game away. You all get together, he said, turn your faces in, listen real hard and learn those plays where nobody else can see . I'm talking about the football huddle, and it was invented in 1924 by a man named Coach McCracken who knew that his team was under fire. He turned them around and made a tight little circle and I'll tell you, folks, sports-minded or no, we in churches have been following his lead ever since. It was a professor from Yale who said that lots of churches look like football huddles - "You know a very important conversation is going on, but all you ever see are the behinds."

With the Religious Right quite literally armed and dangerous, there's a whole lot of folks out there who are under fire. Part of the reason the Metropolitan Community Church exists is that you folks have been under fire since halfway back to forever. You have been under fire, and you have been persecuted, and you have been burned. Am I so very far off base if I say that part of how you have responded is to get yourselves into a tight little huddle and you have some tremendously important conversations - but is it not true that to somebody outside, most of the time all they ever see are the behinds?

I was incredibly proud earlier this week to be at a meeting of the Asheville Interfaith Alliance for Justice. There were something like 60 people gathered in the room - Episcopalians and Jews, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, AME Zion, Presbyterians, Unitarian Universalists, one die-hard atheist - and half a dozen people from the Metropolitan Community Church of Asheville, including their pastor, Frank Scott, my colleague and my friend.

Every one of those six people from the MCC introduced themselves by name and by faith tradition, and when it looked as though discrimination was at risk of slipping from the top three or four issues on the Interfaith Alliance's agenda, every one of those six people from the MCC spoke up, and every one of them stuck around and made it clear that, if what was needed was labor power, they were going to get involved.

You are not alone. You are part of a crowd, a mass -- I believe you are part of the majority of people in this country who believe that the Religious Right is round the bend. And that majority is starting to look up, starting to reach out All around the country are forming Interfaith Alliances, people of faith gathering to make a religious voice heard in opposition to the preaching, the teaching and the legislating of hate.

I know that every one of you have a lot of work to do in your huddles. I know

Maureen Killoran (Continued)

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Rev. Marge Ragona
911G Valley Avenue
Birmingham, AL 35209

Hotel Information AND Conference Registration Form
Gulf Lower Atlantic District Conference --May 17, 18, 19, 1996
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Days Inn Airport/Opryland
Briley Parkway, Nashville, TN

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR PLACE

SPEAKER: Rev. Elder Donald Eastman

1) **Hotel room rate:** $56.00 plus tax per night (up to four persons per room) **if reserved as a member of GLAD**. To receive this $56.00 rate, room reservations need to be made **by April 16, 1996.** The Days Inn Airport/Opryland. Reservations 1-800-851-1962; Local phone--615-361-7666. Free parking.

2) **Early Conference** registration fee: $40.00 received on or before May 10, 1996. Late registration fee: $45.00. The early registration fee includes a buffet breakfast Saturday morning. Early conference registrants will be pre-registered and will receive conference schedules by mail.

Please Print Conference Registration Form **Please Print**

Last Name:_____Title: Ms/ Mr/ Rev/ Pastor/ Dr_____

First Name (to appear on your name tag)_____

Address:_____

City:_____, State:_____, Zip:_____

Church
Affiliation:_____

Indicate (Member, Pastor, Pastoral Leader, Lay Delegate, Staff, Candidate (Student Clergy), District Committee, Deacon, Board Member, Visitor, etc.):_____
Name(s), Title(s), and Church Affiliation(s) of any other person(s) to be included in this reservation:

_____

_____

_____

I am available to participate in worship: (actual assignments will be made at conference)
Friday Evening_____ Saturday Evening____ Sunday Morning_____
I am willing to: _____Lead Prayer ____Read _____Serve Communion____Take Offering

Please describe any particular needs _____
(If appropriate, also inform hotel)

Friday Night Dinner (optional)

Speaker:

Checks should be made out to GLAD
and enclosed with this registration form.

Dinner tickets @$20 each $_____

Registrations @$40 each $_____
after May 10 @$45 each $_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED $_____

Mail to Gulf Lower Atlantic District Office, 1379 Tullie Rd., Atlanta, GA 30329.

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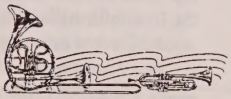

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There's a whole lot of people walking along this path, and we've all got our heads down, and we've all got our eyes right on the ground ahead of us. We're all worrying about where our foot is going to go down next, because we've seen people all around us get sucked into quicksand. We've seen people all around us slip on somebody else's trash. We've seen people all around us trip over their feet. We've seen people all around us go down, and by heaven, we're going to go make sure that doesn't happen to us. I'm reminded of the story about the football coach who was aware that the opposition had been scouting his team for the past five games. They knew every signal his players had and every move they were going to make. So he grabbed hold of his guys and he told them to stay back, don't get out there and signal and give the game away. You all get together, he said, turn your faces in, listen real hard and learn those plays where nobody else can see . I'm talking about the football huddle, and it was invented in 1924 by a man named Coach McCracken who knew that his team was under fire. He turned them around and made a tight little circle and I'll tell you, folks, sports-minded or no, we in churches have been following his lead ever since. It was a professor from Yale who said that lots of churches look like football huddles - "You know a very important conversation is going on, but all you ever see are the behinds."

With the Religious Right quite literally armed and dangerous, there's a whole lot of folks out there who are under fire. Part of the reason the Metropolitan Community Church exists is that you folks have been under fire since halfway back to forever. You have been under fire, and you have been persecuted, and you have been burned. Am I so very far off base if I say that part of how you have responded is to get yourselves into a tight little huddle and you have some tremendously important conversations - but is it not true that to somebody outside, most of the time all they ever see are the behinds?

I was incredibly proud earlier this week to be at a meeting of the Asheville Interfaith Alliance for Justice. There were something like 60 people gathered in the room - Episcopalians and Jews, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, AME Zion, Presbyterians, Unitarian Universalists, one die-hard atheist - and half a dozen people from the Metropolitan Community Church of Asheville, including their pastor, Frank Scott, my colleague and my friend.

Every one of those six people from the MCC introduced themselves by name and by faith tradition, and when it looked as though discrimination was at risk of slipping from the top three or four issues on the Interfaith Alliance's agenda, every one of those six people from the MCC spoke up, and every one of them stuck around and made it clear that, if what was needed was labor power, they were going to get involved.

You are not alone. You are part of a crowd, a mass -- I believe you are part of the majority of people in this country who believe that the Religious Right is round the bend. And that majority is starting to look up, starting to reach out All around the country are forming Interfaith Alliances, people of faith gathering to make a religious voice heard in opposition to the preaching, the teaching and the legislating of hate.

I know that every one of you have a lot of work to do in your huddles. I know

Maureen Killoran (Continued)

Killoran (cont.)

just stay in our huddles passing signals like crazy and feeling good about what's goin' on. The questions I would put to you come straight out of the Talmud; "If not you, who?" "If not now, when?"

When I lived in Oregon I was asked one time to perform a ceremony of union at the headwaters of the Metolius River. We got to the lodge where everybody was gathering, and it was pouring down rain. It just didn't seem possible to do the wedding outside, but it mattered so much to the couple, that when there was a break in the weather, we decided to go for it. Everybody piled into cars and off we went to the parking lot at the access to the headwaters.

The wedding guests trekked off down the path, and when it seemed that they had time to be in place, the flutist started to play and I led the couple and their attendants down the slope. We came around a curve and there on a stone platform overlooking the prettiest little headwater you ever want to see, the guests were all arranged a group of about 30 people and all of them looking at me weird. I didn't have a clue what was up, so I got the couple in place and we went ahead with the ceremony. Only after it was done did my partner come and tell me what had gone on.

They'd gone down the slope, you see, and come to the little platform only to find it filled with about 6" of rain. My partner, who is a very handy sort of guy, figured out pretty quickly that the drain was blocked with leaves. So he got a bunch of people together to pull those leaves aside, just like you'd do if something caught in the drain in your tub. They swept and they pulled, and nothing happened.

They heard the music start and everybody was wringing their hands and then, just as I came around that curve and into sight - whooosh!, the water swirled down the drain and by the time we arrived , it was as if it had never been.

"Wow," said somebody's grandmother - `That minister is one powerful lady."

Now I'm not a Particularly powerful lady, at least not in the sense that woman had in mind. I just happened to be in the right place to get good press, but what really happened was a bunch of people who thought quickly and were willing to get involved - willing to get their hands dirty, not for their own good but for the good of somebody who didn't even know they were in need.

If not us, who?

If not now, when?

John Kennedy was once asked how he came to be a war hero and he replied that it was purely a matter of accident - he was going along minding his

Respect is a key to relationship (Killoran Cont.)

business, and somebody sank his boat. Somebody's out there - and we know who -somebody's out there firing torpedoes at human decency and cutting holes in life preservers.

Somebody's out there - and we know who -

and if we do not work together, if people of faith stay turned inwards and don't work together, then society may well sink, my friends, and not just you, not just me, but everything we value and a everything a humane world needs is going to go down with the ship.

We need to work together, and that's something we don't always know how to do. Somebody did a big study of couples who had been together 15 years or longer - anybody here in a committed relationship they've been in for 15 years or longer? Somebody did a big study a few years ago - gay couples and straight couples, looking for a common denominator of what worked. Some people said this, some people said that, but THE key ingredient that held those long-term couples together when all around them things were flying apart, the key ingredient was RESPECT.

I tell you this - because respect is also what works if you're going to "come our' yet one more time, "come out" and take your place in the Interfaith community. Respect -- as members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that an Interfaith organization will respect both your theology and the lifestyle commitments that make you unique as a religious

It's a right to have your relationship respected

organization.

As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that your relationships will be honored and your opinions will be heard with respect. As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have the right to expect that discrimination in all its insidious forms will be part of the agenda of any organization that calls itself Interfaith. These things are yours, by right, as part of the Interfaith community.

And the other side of this is that rights bring responsibilities. As members of the Metropolitan Community Church, you have a responsibility come into the wider religious community with ears that are open and hearts that are respectful of people whose theology and lifestyle and even priorities are different from your own. Yes, I know at least some of you are sick and tired of dealing with straights who just don't get it or just don't care. But we

We need to use our strength (Killoran cont.)

are in this together - and we are not going to win anything if we try to go it alone.

* * * * *

You probably remember the story about the man who was taking a tour of heaven and hell. He got into hell, and there were all these pots full of wonderful food - the smells were enough to make your mouth water, and the look of the food was enough to make an artist cry. All around the table were people with spoons in their hands, but they were thin, emaciated, and their cries of hunger were piteous to the ear, for their arms were too long and try as they might they could not get a bite of food from the pot into their mouth.

The tourist found the scene too painful, so he asked to be shown a scene from heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye, there he was in an identical room - pots full of glorious, fragrant dinner, and a table surrounded with long-armed people holding spoons. What was different in this room was that the people were happy, their cheeks were rosy and they looked well fed. As the tourist stopped and looked, one of the people dipped her spoon into the pot, reached out to the woman on her right, and gently saw that she was fed.

We need to take whatever strength we have and use it! Not just for our own communities, but for the good of all of the creatures of God.

There's a passage in a book by Annie Dillard that I really like, and its with this passage that I want to close, in her book, Holy the Firm, she writes:

Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? There is no one but us. There is no one to send, nor a clean hand, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time, that our innocent fathers are all dead - as if innocence had ever been - and our children busy and troubled and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready having each of us chosen wrongly, made a false start, failed, yielded to impulse and the tangled comfort of pleasures, and grown exhausted . . But there is no one but us. There never has been.

If not you, who?
If not now , when?

Rev. Maureen Killoran

If not now - When?

From Around The District

Good news from Mississippi. **MCC of the Rainbow** is acquiring a building. Carl Matthews-Naylor , Pastor says the building needs work, but the construction is in the able hands of his partner, Larry Naylor. And **MCC of the Gulfcoast** has acquired a building that is now in the process of renovation. Move in dates for both churches will be announced. **MCC Augusta** now has its own building. They meet at 1736 Fenwick St. **New mailing address for MCC New Life:** P.O. Box 221404, Charlotte, NC 28222. Rev. Delores Berry will be at **St. Mary's MCC - Greensboro** Sunday February 25 at 7 PM. On Friday, Marsha Stevens will be in concert at St. Mary's at 7 PM. Ms. Dare Tolar has resigned as Interim Pastoral leader of **Myrtle Beach MCC.** Vice Moderator Bill Oberst will be heading up a worship team. **MCC Nashville** recently hosted Rev's. Reid Christensen, Pastor, First MCC and Rebecca Leckrone of First, following the resignation of Pastor Rev. Buddy Truluck. **MCC Mobile** prepares to celebrate the dedication of its new Government street building the first weekend of March. Mr. Barry Hundley, Board Member from First MCC, has been appointed by the District Committee to the **Board of Ordained Ministry.** He joins Chair, Rev. Christine Oscar, St. Mary's MCC, Alternate Chair, Rev. Wayne Lindsey, St. John's MCC, Ms. Cindy Walker, MCC Montgomery, Rev. Bob Darst, MCC Winston Salem and Rev. Mick Hinson, MCC Greenville on the board. **Christ Covenant MCC** is currently considering the purchase of a new church building. As this newsletter goes to press, they are looking at an existing church building. Mel Bailey, Pastor, **MCC Coastal Georgia - Savannah** reports that the congregation in this eastern Georgia port city is developing new outreach into the community. Mel came to GLAD from Florida where she was a student clergy. And Rev. Bob Galloway has signed on as Interim Pastoral Leader with **MCC of the Tri-Cities.** New interest groups are forming in Alabama and Georgia. Covenant MCC working with folks in **Anniston** and First MCC working with a group in Carrollton.

District Coordinator's Itinerary:

Safe Harbor MCC 2/23-24
MCC Nashville 2/25
Cornerstone MCC 3/3
General Council 3/12-20
MCC Hickory 3/31

The last publication of the District Newsletter was distributed in November. Due to my bout with a cracked rib and pneumonia, the newsletter was not published in December and January. We still need input from the churches. Many of you are very good about keeping us up-to-date, so that we can share it with the other churches. Please keep up the good work.

And , yes, we are working with our new software to publish this newsletter. God bless all. Jay Neely

utilize this diversity to the benefit of the clergy candidate. Becoming a "Teaching Church" does not preclude the use of resources and diversity found in other churches within the region. If you believe this would enhance the experience that your church could provide, please describe how this would be coordinated with other churches. The District Committee is particularly interested in how prospective teaching churches might provide a candidate with exposure to the large-church, medium-church, and small-church worship experience.

Proposals will be accepted by the District Committee through April 15, 1996. Please mail six (6) copies of your proposal to the District Coordinator. We thank you for your continued efforts as we minister together to God' s people in the Gulf Lower Atlantic District.

For the District Committee,

The Reverend Jay Neely

Copy: The GLAD Committee
The GLAD Board of Ordained Ministry

GULF LOWER ATLANTIC DISTRICT

Memorandum

To: US District Coordinators

CC: UFMCC Headquarters

From: Reverend Jay Neely

Date: March 6, 1996

Re: ALERT

The following information comes from MCC Chattanooga (TN). Please advise your churches.

Mark Stauffer, Male, early 30s-late 20s, 5'10. 145, Dirty blond crew-cut.

The subject allegedly came to Chattanooga and claimed to know people at MCC of the Rockies. He was referred to MCC Chattanooga by "Chattanooga Cares" and AIDS service in that Tennessee city.

He claimed to be HIV positive, and told members of the congregation he had been bequeathed a large sum of money, and needed to get to the Midwest to claim the bequest. A car was rented for him to use, but he never returned. The car was later found in Osage, Missouri, and at present the person who rented the car for him owes $5K to the rental company. He allegedly kited $8k worth of checks in Chattanooga before his departure. Authorities report he owes money to banks and merchants all over the country.

If this person appears at your church, or if you have information concerning him, please call Detective Milo Ware, C/O the Chattanooga Police Department.

Gulf Lower Atlantic District

of the ***Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches***

January 10, 1991

God will not forget the work you did or the love you showed for God in the help you gave and are still giving to your fellow Christians. Our great desire is that each one of you keep up their eagerness to the end, so the things you hope for will come true.

Hebrews 6 10 & 11

We move into 1991 thankful for the many blessings God has bestowed on us in GLAD. And everyone to stands ready to accept the challenge of God's continued beneficence. With great joy we look forward to meeting the demands of the ministry to which God has called every one of us. Praise God!

LOOKING AHEAD:

District Conference - Atlanta April 26-28
(Registration forms will be mailed next month. Preliminary information was included in last month's newsletter.)***

General Conference XV - Phoenix, AR July 14-21
(Registration forms have been sent to the churches, please see your Pastor or Lay Delegate. There will be a "Fellowship" talent program, and each District is asked to have **one** entry. Please see more information below).

District Conference - Chattanooga November 1-3

***At **DISTRICT CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA** in April, we are planning to have some very special music programs. Part of the program will be a "Combined Choir" for Saturday evening, as well as a pre-service musical program. We urge all of our churches who have choirs to participate. The material will be sent to each church, so the choirs can practice. Victor Host, Music Director of First MCC - Atlanta will be coordinating the program. Music Directors, Pastors, Pastoral Leaders, etc. are urged to contact Victor. Those with musical gifts wishing to take part outside of the choir are urged to contact Victor at (404) 352-8414 (evenings). We will also be looking to make a selection to represent us in the GENERAL CONFERENCE talent program.

Make plans now to attend these conferences. Pray, Praise and Celebrate!

MCC Greenville has called Rev. Frank Beard as their Pastor. Frank and his partner, Brent Rose, move to Greenville this month. Frank is a transfer Clergy orginally ordained in the Methodist

Church. More recently he has been on staff at MCC of the Rockies. We welcome Frank and Brent to Glad, and urge all of you to be in touch as they settle in.

Someone was looking after me.... Rev. Lynn Guerra, **MCC Charlotte,** was crossing the street at a crosswalk in Charlotte, when a van came barreling down on her. Lynn had just completed a pre-christmas hospital visit and was returning home when she was hit square on by the vehicle. Next thing she knew she was back on the side-walk with only a hyper-extended wrist.

Rev. Ernie Edwards, **MCC Mobile,** at this writing is in the hospital. This is the second trip to the hospital for Rev. Ernie and he, and the MCC Mobile Congregation, has our prayers.

Pastor Mary Moore, **MCC Charleston** reports that attendance has increased so much that they are looking for a new Church location. In December that loving congregation also experienced it's first $1000.00 offering.

St. Mary's MCC - Greensboro now has 94 members, and on the second Sunday of this month has 113 in attendance. Rev. Christine Oscar has embarked on an ambitious schedule for the **Grief and Bereavement Ministry.** She recently traveled to All Saints - Atlanta to conduct a workshop. She can be contacted at 919-272-1606. I attended the Atlanta workshop and came away with many new understandings about the grief process.

February 9th, Saturday, The Grief & Bereavement workshop will be conducted at **MCC Huntsville.** Registration fee is $15.00 (Scholarships are available). For information call 205-533-6220.

Rev. Steve Pieters will be at **First MCC - Atlanta** Jan 25-26-27. Steve is the Director of the Fellowship AIDS Ministry, and was cured of AIDS following a diagnosis in 1984. There will be an AIDS vigil of prayer, an interfaith service and weekend workshops. The activities begin on Friday. For more information call (404)-872-2246.

Visiting Church Family Rev. Lisa Dawn McCabe in Augusta, Rev. Reid Christensen at Montgomery Rev. Liz Leech in Mobile all on January 20th.

Congratulations!! Rev. Bob Galloway, **MCC Knoxville,** Ms. Penny Campbell, and Rev. Rod Bragg, both **MCC Nashville.** "DARE", A Tennessee Newspaper serving our community, voted Pastor Bob as runner-up "Man of the Year", and Penny as runner-up "Woman of the Year" in it's annual recognition of people who have made a difference in our Tennessee community. Pastor Rod was nominated as one of several people who exemplified the volunteer spirit. Rev. Galloway is preparing for a well deserved sabbatical, which he will spend studying Celtic religions in Scotland.
MCC Nashville will be celebrating it's "MORTGAGE BURNING" on Saturday, Jan. 26th. with a special celebration.. Praise God! And Pastor Rod Bragg marks his first anniversary in Nashville on

February 17th.

New Life MCC - Charlotte joins in celebration of "Founders" Day on January 20th. Pastor Mary Moore of **MCC Charleston** will be the guest speaker.Pastor Bob and all of our friends at New Life are in our prayers!!!

All Saints MCC - Atlanta will have a spiritual renewal on Feb. 1,2 & 3 conducted by Rev. Sherri Boothman. Rev. Boothman, now Pastoring a congregation in California, is the former President of Samaritan Bible College. A special workshop will be held Saturday Feb. 2, "Gay & Lesbian People in the Faith Community" from 10 A - 3 P. For information on services and the workshop call (404) 622-1154.

Covenant MCC - Birmingham will be celebrating it's anniversary Feb. 16th and 17th. Pastor Mary Moore, **MCC Charleston**, Rev. Christine Oscar, **St. Mary's MCC - Greensboro** and your District Coordinator will be joining them for the celebration and conducting workshop's on Saturday the 16th. For more information contact (205) 326-8529.

Bridge Builders a special outreach of this District; a people to people contact by members of our family, is now co-chaired by Bob Kinney, **All Saints MCC** (404 622-1154) and Chuck Torrey,**MCC Mobile** (205 476-4621). The volunteers for this group are caring folk who enjoy personal contact with other churches. If you know of anyone who would like to participate, please have them contact Bob or Chuck at their respective churches. Leave a message and they will return the call.

Samaritan/GLAD Partnership Dean Rev. Sandra Robinson tells me that our District ranks fourth in the number of people participating in Samaritan courses AND FOURTH IN SUPPORT!!!

District Coordinator's Itinerary:

Jan. 19 & 20	MCC Chattanooga
Feb. 16 & 17	Covenant MCC Birmingham
Feb. 23	District Committee Meeting - Atlanta
March 13 -20	General Council Los Angeles.

In a recent Sermon at **First MCC**, Pastor Reid Christensen, delivered the following words that speak so eloquently of our ministry:

"We live in a time when the inclusiveness of the Gospel is sorely needed. Watch the news, pick up a newspaper, Look at the middle east crisis. Yet the (universal) church is reluctant to leave it's own exclusiveness and parochialism. Thank God UFMCC is in the forefront of these (inclusiveness) areas. I just read an article this past week which reports about the decline of the Protestant church membership throughout this country. It is appalling. We're not talking about single digits, we're talking about double digits. 10, 12, 15, 20 as high as 30 per-cent decrease in Protestant Denominations in this country. When we need God the most, we

have people not responding. But, the mystery, in spite of all our efforts, (to tell) of what Christ's coming is all about, it is still a secret to so many. Some of you in the bar ministry have attested to that. People are still unwilling to recognize in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile, no insider, no outsider, there's no black or white, sacred or secular, no conservative, no radical, all the opposites we can think of are diminished. The barriers are removed through Christ. God's will, announced through Christ's coming, is to unite all things in Christ; all things. And Christ does so by reaching out to everyone; everyone. And we can gather as those who see it, and come together to celebrate it.

Rev. Reid Christensen, First MCC

To each of you I encourage your every effort to reach out to all, to bring the saving Grace of Christ to our many sisters and brothers who have been denied through the narrowness of human intervention. May God Bless each and everyone of you.

Jay

AND THIS EDITORIAL OF INTEREST:

Unfair rule barring gay soldiers must end

The Pentagon policy barring gays from military service is absurd enough in peace times, but now military officials want to make it downright despicable in this crisis.

Despite study after study showing gay men and women serve their country well, the Pentagon maintains that homosexuals must be driven from the ranks. Of course now that a war is imminent in Kuwait, military officials are having a slight change of heart.

The Defense Department says that while regulations barring gays from the military still stand, the discharge of homosexuals now may be "deferred" until they are no longer needed for Operation Desert Shield.

In other words, gays will be required to risk their lives for their country, but as soon as the shooting stops, they will be kicked out of the service.

The new policy came to light last week when Reserve Support Specialist Donna Lynn Jackson of San Diego became the first gay reservist to openly announce her sexual orientation. While Spec. Jackson, who serves with the 129th Evacuation Hospital Unit at Fort Ord, Calif., says she is quite willing to serve in Saudi Arabia, she wants to be assured that she won't be discharged upon her return.

The Army refuses to give her that assurance on the grounds that gays aren't fit to make a career in the military during peacetime. However, the Army also won't let her leave now because the need for fully staffed units is taking precedence over the desire to enforce the discharge policy.

So the Pentagon is willing to admit its own studies are correct: Gays make valuable contributions to the military and are fully reliable members of the service. But officials aren't willing to admit their ban on gays is hypocritical, unfair and unnecessary.

If ever the time was right to permanently end the ban on gays, this is it.

THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION
For 122 Years the South's Standard Newspaper
A-8 The Atlanta Journal AND CONSTITUTION TUES., JANUARY 15, 1991 ****